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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Fifty-third session
(21-23 April 1998)

PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE FIFTY-THIRD SESSION

to be held in the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
starting at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, 21 April 1998

1. Adoption of the Agenda

2. Strengthening cooperation within the ECE region

   (a) Major trends in the ECE region

   (b) Operational activities and cooperation with subregional groupings, interests and initiatives

   (c) Cooperation with the business community and NGOs

3. Implementation of the Reform and preparations for the ECOSOC review of the regional commissions

   (a) Exchange of views on the implementation of the reform, with the participation of Principal Subsidiary Bodies

   (b) Exchange of views on intersectoral issues and cross-sectoral concerns, with the participation of Principal Subsidiary Bodies

   (c) Relations with other regional, subregional and global organizations and institutions

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(d) Commission Session

(e) Other matters arising from the work of subsidiary bodies requiring decision by the Commission

4. Election of Officers

5. Other business

6. Annual Report of the Commission

EXPLANATORY NOTES TO AGENDA AND TIMETABLE

General

1. The dates of 21 to 23 April 1998 have been reserved for the fifty-third session of the Commission. In accordance with the Commission's Rules of Procedure, the documents referred to in the Provisional Agenda will, wherever possible, be transmitted to Governments not less than forty-two days before the opening of the session, i.e. not later than 10 March 1998.

2. The provisional agenda has been conceived taking into account the revised structure of the annual session contained in Chapter III of the Plan of Action, as well as other requirements mentioned in the Plan of Action relating to the implementation of the Reform. Pursuant to the Secretary-General's reform efforts, the Agenda also includes an item relating to the review of the regional commissions by ECOSOC.

3. As part of the ongoing efforts of all concerned to revitalize the sessions of the Commission, the Bureau believes that the practice of delivering prepared statements should be discontinued and that instead delegations should limit themselves to specific observations and proposals for action. Any delegations wishing to provide a text for distribution are requested to provide the secretariat, preferably in advance of the Session, with sufficient copies (approximately 70).

4. As decided in the Plan of Action, the annual session will be preceded, on 20 April 1998, by a seminar; this year's seminar will be on Enterprise and Bank Restructuring in the Transition Economies.

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Item 1: Adoption of the Agenda

5. The adoption of the agenda will be followed by opening remarks by the Chairman of the Commission and the Executive Secretary.

Item 2: Strengthening cooperation within the ECE region

(a) Major trends in the ECE region

6. As called for in the Plan of Action, a one-day debate will be organized on a major economic theme. It is suggested that the debate for this year's session might focus on those factors which risk increasing divergences in economic development among the countries of the region.

7. In a short introduction to the Economic Survey of Europe, the secretariat will highlight these factors. A representative of a financial institution will comment thereon. This presentation will set the stage for a debate structured as follows:

(i) The fragility of the banking system in the transition economies and their vulnerability to external shocks: could a crisis similar to those which occurred in Latin America and in Asia occur in Europe? This segment will be initiated with the views of three panellists and benefit from the conclusions of the preceding day's seminar on Enterprise and Bank Restructuring in the Transition Economies.

(ii) The economic uncertainties facing European countries outside the Euro zone. The debate will be introduced by two personalities who could address the uncertainties linked to the strength of the Euro and implications for the monetary and trade policies of non-Euro countries.

(iii) The economic risks as well as the benefits to the region of increased globalization. The debate will be introduced by two personalities who could address how regional cooperation could mitigate the risks and increase the benefits.

8. To ensure an interesting debate, panellists/personalities will be invited from Governments, financial institutions and banks, and academic circles. As indicated above, there will be no statements. After the introduction of each segment, member countries are invited to react accordingly.

9. To facilitate reaction from member countries, an informal note on the issues will be distributed in advance by the secretariat.

(b) Operational activities and cooperation with subregional groupings, interests and initiatives

10. The Commission will have before it, as background information, a short report on the Commission's Operational Activities (E/ECE/1359), which will cover, inter alia:

- the state of the implementation of the ECE mandate to respond to the specific needs of the countries in transition;

- ECE's cooperation with subregional groupings, initiatives and interests (including the Commonwealth of Independent States, Black Sea Economic Cooperation, Southeast European Cooperative Initiative, Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia, Central European Initiative, Mediterranean, Baltic);
  (Cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is addressed under agenda item 3 below)

- The Regional Advisory Services Programme.

11. Discussion under this item will focus on whether operational activities should be organized more on a subregional basis or more on a country-by-country basis.

(c) Cooperation with the business community and NGOs

12. A background note (E/ECE/1360) will be available to facilitate an exchange of views on ethical guidelines governing relationships with the business community, following which the Commission will provide guidance to the ad hoc working group which will, as per the Plan of Action, be established to consider this issue. The note will also address the cross-sectoral concern identified in the Plan of Action relating to the involvement of the business community in all ECE activities.

Item 3: Implementation of the Reform and preparations for the ECOSOC review of the regional commissions

(a) Exchange of views on the implementation of the reform, with the participation of Principal Subsidiary Bodies

13. A short report on implementation of the reform (E/ECE/1361) will include, inter alia:

- information on the review conducted by PSBs on the status of their related bodies (see Plan of Action, Chapter III, A. Reforms of the Commission and the PSBs);
- a summary of any difficulties encountered in implementing the reform;
- as appropriate, suggestions for addressing these difficulties.

(b) Exchange of views on intersectoral issues and cross-sectoral concerns, with the participation of Principal Subsidiary Bodies

14. The above-mentioned report E/ECE/1361 will also deal with intersectoral issues, particularly as they relate to transport and environment (Chapter II of the Plan of Action). In this connection, the convening of a joint meeting of the Bureaux of the Inland Transport Committee and the Committee on Environmental Policy in June 1998 will be discussed. In addition to intersectoral issues, the Plan of Action addresses cross-sectoral concerns. "Special concern for economies in transition" is dealt with under this sub-item. The "involvement of the business community" is covered under agenda item 2 (c) above. The two other cross-sectoral concerns will be reported on at the fifty-fourth session of the Commission in 1999.

15. There will be no statements by PSB Chairmen on the work of the PSBs. Discussion/debate will focus on difficulties encountered in the implementation of the reform and suggestions for related action and intersectoral activities.

(c) Relations with other regional, subregional and global organizations and institutions

16. The Commission will have before it a short note (E/ECE/1362) which will update information on ECE's relations with other regional, subregional and global organizations and institutions, both within and outside the UN System:

European Commission, Council of Europe, OSCE, OECD, EBRD, WTO, UNDP, UNEP, UNCTAD, DESA etc.

17. The debate will focus on the ECE contribution to the ECOSOC review of the regional commissions which will consider the core competencies of the regional commissions vis-à-vis global bodies and other regional and subregional intergovernmental bodies, with a view to determining the most appropriate division of labour.

(d) Commission Session

18. The Commission decided at its fifty-second session that the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work would report its findings to the Commission after examining all relevant legal and other issues related to biennialization of the annual session. A note by the Chairman of the Commission on this matter (E/ECE/1363) will be before the Commission, highlighting all issues raised during the Chairman's consultations, including that related to maintaining the support and interest of Governments' central administrations.

(e) Other matters arising from the work of subsidiary bodies requiring decision by the Commission

19. Under sub-item (b), the Commission will deal with any matter arising from the work of the subsidiary bodies which requires decision by the Commission.

Item 4: Election of Officers

Item 5: Other business

Item 9: Annual report of the Commission

Closure of the session.

SUMMARY TABLE

Date	Agenda Item	ECE Documents
Tuesday, 21 April: morning	1. Opening of the session - Adoption of the Agenda 2. Strengthening cooperation within the ECE region (a) Major trends in the ECE region: (I) The fragility of the banking system in the transition economies. (ii) The economic uncertainties facing European countries outside the Euro zone. (iii) The economic risks as well as the benefits to the region of increased globalization.	E/ECE/1358
Tuesday, 21 April: afternoon	2. Strengthening cooperation within the ECE region (continued) (a) Major trends in the ECE region (continued)	
Wednesday, 22 April: morning	2. Strengthening cooperation within the ECE region (continued) (b) Operational activities and cooperation with subregional groupings, interests and initiatives (c) Cooperation with the business community and NGOs	E/ECE/1359 E/ECE/1360
Wednesday, 22 April: afternoon	3. Implementation of the Reform and preparations for the ECOSOC review of the regional commissions (a) Exchange of views on the implementation of the reform, with the participation of PSBs	E/ECE/1361

Date	Agenda Item	ECE Documents
Thursday, 23 April: morning	**3. Implementation of the Reform and preparations for the ECOSOC review of the regional commissions (continued)**	
	(b) Exchange of views on intersectoral issues and cross-sectoral concerns, with the participation of PSBs	**E/ECE/1361**
	(c) Relations with other regional, subregional and global organizations and institutions	**E/ECE/1362**
	(d) Commission Session	**E/ECE/1363**
	(e) Other matters arising from the work of subsidiary bodies requiring decision by the Commission	
Thursday, 23 April: afternoon	**4 Election of officers**	
	5. Other business	
	6. Annual Report of the Commission	